

APPROVED

MINUTES

**McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission
One Civic Center
1st Floor Community Development Conference Room
7447 E. Indian School Road
Scottsdale, Arizona 85251
Thursday, March 3, 2005**

CALL TO ORDER

Chair DeCabooter called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m., noting the presence of a quorum.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Art DeCabooter, Chairman
Christine Kovach, Vice-Chair
Carla
Denny Carr
Erik Filsinger
Virginia Korte
Howard Myers
Arnold Roy
Don Ruff
Solange Whitehead

Absent: Laura Fisher

Staff: Bob Cafarella
Claire Miller
Don Meserve

Others attending all or a portion of the meeting:

Dan Gruber, Steward
Joe Yarchin, AZ. Game and Fish Department

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

October 7, 2004

COMMISSIONER CARR MOVED TO APPROVE THE OCTOBER 7, 2004 MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. COMMISSIONER FILSINGER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF TEN (10) TO ZERO (0).

December 2, 2004

Commissioner Carla noted the following corrections: Page 2, Thompson Peak Summit, change manger to manager. Third page, under State Land Reform change rural to urban, not rural elements.

COMMISSIONER RUFF MOVED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 2, 2004 MINUTES AS AMENDED. COMMISSIONER WHITEHEAD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF TEN (10) TO ZERO (0).

DISCUSSION: CONCEPTUAL TRAILS PLAN FOR THE PRESERVE

Mr. Cafarella recalled that many of the Commissioners had requested this agenda item. He noted that Joe Yarchin, Arizona Game and Fish Department, was present to assist in the discussion. Mr. Cafarella asked the Commissioners to keep in mind the length of time and great effort that went into developing the trails plan. He added that it would take many years to fully implement, and that room for modifications are built in.

Commissioner Carr expressed concern regarding the coordination of Preserve access with the trails that lead up to those access points. He suggested dialogue between the city Trails representative and the Transportation Department. Commissioner Carr recommended that access into Fountain Hills should also be a priority.

Mr. Cafarella noted that a staff person was looking at paved and bicycle lanes. He stated that Mr. Hamilton had spoken with him and that perhaps a meeting would be productive with the addition of Mr. Carr's knowledge of the surrounding area. He also proposed that attendance by Mr. Myers and/or Mr. Carr at the Transportation Commission meeting as Preserve Commissioners would be beneficial. He added that it would be helpful for them to mention the nine access areas relative to the bike system feeding those areas as something transportation might want to look at.

Commissioner Carla added that the northern area has many miles of trail already, and that the Planning Committee had worked very hard with all of the user groups to winnow down the trails in order to maintain wildlife habitat in the Preserve. She stated that the availability to connect with Fountain Hills through that valley was inappropriate, as the area had purposely not included a trail because of habitat. She referred to the suggestion for more perimeter trails in the southern part of the Preserve, and noted the presence of developments in the area. She suggested that the Planning Committee, Commissioner Carr and Myers, could work with staff to develop more outside connectors to the trail system. She requested that any proposal come through the Planning Committee and the Commission for review and approval.

Mr. Yarchin reviewed the recommendations to protect and maintain wildlife in the Preserve. He stated that common sense used in minimizing any disturbance in the Preserve was crucial. He noted that fragmentation, number of trails, crowding, and habituation issues all impact the indigenous wildlife.

Discussion ensued as to the Sunrise Trail and the potential spur into Fountain Hills. Commissioner Carla commented that the problem was compounded by the fact that Fountain Hills does not allow equestrian use on their trails. Commissioner Carr referred to development issues, and suggested signage noting future access points as a proactive move that would desensitize residents to the potential for access points. Commissioner Carla again cautioned against too many access points relative to wildlife preservation. Mr. Cafarella commented that the issue might be minimized considering the paucity of land remaining for development.

Chair DeCabooter directed the Planning Committee to review Commissioner Carr's suggestions and other issues raised and return to the Commission. He stated that the Commission would then prepare for a formal meeting with Fountain Hills for further discussion.

UPDATE: DESERT DISCOVERY CENTER

Commissioner Carla distributed a Desert Discovery Center fact sheet. She provided the history of the Center planning process. She stated that a study had been commissioned to outline the direction for the center, and that plans for the Center have been reactivated now that the city is getting the land. Commissioner Carla stated that former Councilman Silverman is chairing the Planning Committee for the Center, and that City Council has approved bed-tax dollars to update the original study. She stated that pursuant to the report, the issue would be referred to the Preserve Commission and the TDC for a decision as to whether a capital campaign or other funding sources would be appropriate.

Mr. Cafarella observed that two factors had precipitated renewed interest in the Desert Discovery Center: improvement in the city's financial outlook, and a desire to couple the Center with the Gateway Project.

UPDATE: STATUS OF STATE LAND REFORM

Commissioner Carla recalled that three bills had been introduced relative to state land reform, none of which are as comprehensive as the original. She noted that the areas of contention in the original bill were the rural components, and that Senator Carolyn Allen and Senator O'Halleran have sponsored a bill. She explained that the fate of that bill remains to be seen. but that it does contain many good elements. Commissioner Carla also noted that Ken Bennett has proposed a bill to fund the State Land Department, and move most urban state land out the door. That bill has been opposed by the education community. She stated that efforts are ongoing to salvage a bill based on State Land Reform "Light." She also noted that there are several coalitions forming to look at a possible initiative.

DISCUSSION/ POSSIBLE ACTION: APRIL AND MAY COMMISSION MEETING DATES

Chair DeCabooter noted that there were possible conflicts for the Commission's April and May regular meeting dates. Commissioner Carla noted that the Preservation party was scheduled for April 7, and thus the request to hold the regular meeting on April 14. Chair DeCabooter noted that the regular May meeting conflicted with the History Makers event and noted that Commissioner Carla was being honored at that event. Chair DeCabooter stated that the April meeting would be moved to April 14, and the May meeting would be held on May 12.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT.

Mr. Cafarella announced the opening of the Sunrise Trail on March 4, 2005. He noted that the stewards had worked very hard. He commented that there had been some problems with the junction box for the power to the gate, and that an additional road surface coat and seal would be added after the opening. He encouraged attendance by the Commissioners at the opening event. Mr. Cafarella stated that an RFP for the construction contract for Lost Dog Wash was being prepared, and would be presented to City Council in June or July.

PRESERVE MANAGER'S REPORT

Ms. Miller announced that she would be working with a large corporate group from Medtronic on the Windgate Pass Trail as their annual community service project. She noted that she had reinforced with the group the fact that it is a closed trail. She also commented that the Trails Contractor was making good progress and indicated that he would be at the Pass by Sunday.

Ms. Miller advised the Commission that the Trails Contractor and Mr. Hamilton would join her at the Professional Trail Builders Conference in Reno the following week. She added that they would be giving two seminars at the conference.

FUTURE EXECUTIVE SESSION

COMMISSIONER RUFF MOVED AND COMMISSIONER CARR SECONDED A MOTION TO HOLD AN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR APRIL 14, 2005, FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PUBLIC BODY AND CONSULTATION WITH CITY ATTORNEY FOR LEGAL ADVICE TO CONSIDER ITS POSITION AND INSTRUCT ITS REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING NEGOTIATING FOR PURCHASE OR LEASE OF REAL PROPERTY FOR INCLUSION IN THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY A VOTE OF TEN (10) TO ZERO (0).

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commissioner Carla stated that she and Commissioner Myers would participate in a meeting with APS on the following Tuesday regarding a resolution to the ongoing issue of possible substations or power lines in the Preserve.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Commissioner Carla suggested an update on the Preserve Enforcement Coordination for the May Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Being duly moved and seconded, the regular meeting was adjourned at 5:55 p.m., with Executive Session to follow.

Respectfully submitted,

“For the Record” Reporters